

Los Padres National Forest



Figueroa Mountain Wildflower Update

April 12, 2017

Hello everyone!

The different varieties of wildflowers continue to bloom throughout Figueroa Mountain, however, so are the grasses. The flowers that grow on bushes, vines, tall varieties or those growing in disturbed soil where they are not competing with the grasses are doing great and looking lovely. Some of the late spring variety are starting to come out, yet others aren't. Will the wildflowers stay with us longer this year because of all the rain or will the grasses take over the late field varieties as well? Only time will tell, but for now, let's see what beautiful Figueroa Mountain has in store for us.

A friendly reminder before we begin. When you stop to look and take pictures of all the beauties, please make sure that you park on the shoulder of the road and not on the road itself. If there isn't a place to stop, find a turn-out and walk back to the area. Please do not block the road at any time as this will be enforced.

Shall we begin?

Starting at the first cattle guard and continuing to the canopy area, shiny buttercups, fiesta flowers, blue dicks, fiddlenecks, Johnny jump-ups, fillaree, miner's lettuce, a couple of royal lupine, charming Chinese houses, beautiful hummingbird sage and silly blow wives are still in bloom, but there are fewer and fewer every day. Keep in mind, the wildflowers bloom early in the lower elevation and are also the first to retire for the season, however, exquisite wine cup clarkia are starting to bloom. Within the canopy area, miniature lupine, blue dicks, fiesta flowers, Johnny jump-ups, buttercups and miner's lettuce can still be found, but are rapidly being covered by the tall grasses.

As you continue up the hill, a few beautiful California poppies are in bloom along the road and on the rocky hillsides. If you look at Grass Mountain, you will see that there is no orange peeking through whatsoever. Grass Mountain is certainly living up to its name. Right before you get to the rusty gate, you will notice that the cream cups are gone, but fillaree and a handful of poppies continue to bloom.

Along the rock wall on your right, look for golden yarrow, poppies, Chinese houses, purple wild onion, chalk Dudley and clematis. As you continue up the hill, you will find blow wives, mustard, golden yarrow, goldfields as they are beginning to fade, buckwheat as it starts to bloom, striking Catalina mariposa lilies, wallflowers, blue-eyed grass, buttercups, blue dicks, a lonely royal lupine, dandelions, morning glories and a bush lupine.

Vista Point (large gravel turnout about 11.4 miles from the bottom), is pretty bare in regards to wildflowers. The goldfields, fillaree and blue-eyed grass is tired and going fast, while the shooting stars and chocolate lilies have gone to seed. The same goes for the rocky area across the road for the exception of a few blue dicks, blow wives, golden yarrow, poppies and lomatium.

As you pass the station, the fields of shooting stars have gone to seed in preparation for next year's beauties, however, buttercups and blue dicks are still in bloom and the bush lupine continues to shine.

In the field to the right, before Tunnell Ranch Road, look for golden yarrow, buttercups, wild onions, clover and a whole lot of stunning orange wall flowers. As you continue on to the next location, look for mustard and a Mexican elderberry in bloom.

About a half mile further, on the infamous poppy hillside, poppies and lupine are far and few between. The golden top grass has totally consumed this hillside. In fact, while witches hair (California dodder) normally takes over once fatigue sets in for the poppies and lupine, this year the golden top grass had a different agenda. Although the poppies and sky lupine might not be doing well in this area, the bush lupine is in its glory. These stunning beauties are everywhere around

this area and enchant us with their delightful aroma. Their beauty is radiating along the road and filling the hillsides with their vibrant purple hues. Don't forget your camera, you will certainly want to take pictures of these lovelies, unfortunately, you can't capture their breathtaking fragrance, but if you ever figure out how, please share your secret. As you continue past the closed Lookout Road, look for California poppies, sky lupine, blue dicks and globe gillias. Because there is little to no grass in this area, the poppies continue to bloom, the globe gillias are showing off and the sky lupine are gorgeous in the few carpeted patches under the trees to your left.

Continuing on Figueroa Mountain Road to the Davy Brown trailhead, common phacelias, poppies, bush lupine, chia, blue dicks and purple nightshade are in bloom.

About one half mile further, the shooting stars have gone to seed, but look for buttercups, blue dicks, sky lupine and bush lupine. About ¼ mile further, in the fields adjacent to the large dirt turnout on the left, lovely chocolate lilies are still scattered throughout and continue along the surrounding areas but will not be there for long. They are quickly getting tired and getting ready to go to seed. If you want to get a look at these beauties, do it real soon before they go away. Other flowers sharing these fields include buttercups and lomatium. As you continue on Figueroa Mountain Road, look for goldfields, tidy tips, fillaree, blue dicks, golden yarrow, beautiful dandelions, blow wives and delightful red Indian paintbrush along the rocky areas.

Just beyond the gate at the entrance of Ranger Peak, sweet baby blue eyes are trying so hard to look at you, but the grass is too tall and they are disappearing in this area, but fear not, as they are still in full bloom in the shaded areas as you continue up and over Ranger Peak. You will also find sky lupine, fiddleneck and some poppies.

From Ranger Peak to Cachuma Saddle, the bush varieties of flowers continue to bloom. The bush lupine, however, along this stretch is currently striking but they are beginning to go to seed. They probably have another 10 days or so before the flowers are gone. The bush poppies, however, are blooming strong. This flower's effervescent yellow is absolutely remarkable. Keep your eyes out for golden yarrow, manzanita, poppies, Mexican elderberry, fiddleneck, wall flowers, popcorn flowers, Indian paintbrush, clematis, purple nightshade and black sage as you continue along this area.

Sunset Valley continues to impress. As you turn left on Sunset Valley, look for fillaree, deer vetch, goldfields, yellow poppies, popcorn flower, purple nightshade, coreopsis, blue dicks, wild cucumber, milk thistle, Chinese houses and clematis. As you start going down the hill towards Davy Brown, the bush poppies continue to paint the hilltops in yellow. Along this stretch, you will find stinging lupine, chia, prickly phlox, wild cucumber, Mexican elderberry, morning glories, milk thistle, clematis, globe gillias and scarlet buglers. From the Davy Brown Campground to NIRA Campground, look for more yellow poppies, chia, sweet baby blue eyes, gorgeous Nuttles Larkspur, sky lupine, buttercups, coreopsis, morning glories, Chinese houses, bush poppies, prickly phlox, blue dicks and the beginning of sticky leaf monkey flowers.

As you return from Sunset Valley (since it dead ends at NIRA Campground), I have some great news. The dirt portion of Happy Canyon has been fixed and is now passable. You can now continue your tour down Happy Canyon with a regular passenger vehicle.

As you continue onto Happy Canyon Road, look for stinging lupine on the disturbed, gravel hillsides on the left, along with purple nightshade. Also, making their presence, are Colter lupine, poppies, vetch, globe gillias, Nuttles and Parish larkspur, purple nightshade, clematis, black sage, golden yarrow, bush poppies, blue dicks and the last of the royal lupine. On some of the rocky walls, you will also see Indian paintbrush and common hedge nettles.

That's all for this update. Look for our next wildflower update in two weeks. Until then, happy viewing! If you would like to be added to the Figueroa Wildflower Update email list, please contact Helen Tarbet by e-mail at htarbet@fs.fed.us.



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